

## Do You Know the Hidden Risks of Atrial Fibrillation?

The greatest risk from AFib is a

**5x**

**GREATER RISK FOR STROKE**



Warning signs of stroke – **F.A.S.T.**



**F** - FACE DROOPING  
**A** - ARM WEAKNESS  
**S** - SPEECH DIFFICULTY  
**T** - TIME TO CALL 9-1-1

Other signs of stroke include:

- Sudden numbness especially on one side
- Sudden confusion or trouble speaking/understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness or loss of balance
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause

If you have Afib, learn more about how to lower stroke risks. Visit [www.heart.org/AFibAwareness](http://www.heart.org/AFibAwareness)

## WHAT IS ATRIAL FIBRILLATION?

Normally, your heart contracts and relaxes to a regular beat. Certain cells in your heart make electric signals that cause the heart to contract and pump blood. These electrical signals show up on an electrocardiogram (ECG) recording. Your doctor can read your ECG to find out if the electric signals are normal.

In atrial fibrillation (AFib), the heart's two small upper chambers (atria) don't beat the way they should. Instead of beating in a normal pattern, the atria beat irregularly and too fast, quivering like a bowl of gelatin. It's important for the heart to pump properly so your body gets the oxygen and food it needs.

### How do I know if I have atrial fibrillation?

Here are some of the symptoms you may have:

- Irregular and rapid heartbeat
- Heart palpitations or rapid thumping inside the chest
- Dizziness, sweating and chest pain or pressure
- Shortness of breath or anxiety
- Tiring more easily when exercising
- Fainting (syncope)

### Can Afib lead to other problems?

Yes. You can live with AFib, but it can lead to other medical problems including:

- Stroke
- Heart failure
- Chronic fatigue

- Additional heart rhythm problems
- Inconsistent blood supply

The risk of stroke is about five times higher in people with AFib. This is because with AFib blood can pool in the atria and blood clots can form.

### What can be done to correct it?

Treatment options may include one or more of the following:

- Medicines, such as beta blockers or antiarrhythmics, to help return your heart rate to a normal rhythm.
- Medicines, such as digitalis, calcium channel blockers or amiodarone to help slow your heart rate.
- Blood thinners to keep blood clots from forming.
- Electrical cardioversion (an electric shock) to change the beat of your heart back to normal
- Surgery, a pacemaker or other procedures may be needed.

Your treatment will depend on the underlying cause of your AFib and your level of disability.

### How can I lower my risk of stroke?

To **reduce your stroke risk**, your doctor may prescribe you drugs to keep blood clots from forming. Two examples are anticoagulants and antiplatelets such as warfarin and aspirin.

Anticoagulants include warfarin and three other more recently FDA approved drugs referred to as novel oral anticoagulants or NOACs — dabigatran, rivaroxaban and apixaban.

- Always tell your doctor, dentist and pharmacist if you take any of these medications.

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## AFIB (CONT.)

- If you have any unusual bleeding or bruising or other problems, tell your doctor right away.

### How can I learn more?

1. Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit [heart.org](http://heart.org) to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
2. Sign up to get Heart Insight, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at [heartinsight.org](http://heartinsight.org).
3. Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at [heart.org/supportnetwork](http://heart.org/supportnetwork).

### Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example: What should my pulse be? How do I take my pulse?

## HEART ATTACK SYMPTOMS IN WOMEN

1. Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain in the center of your chest. It lasts more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back.
2. Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
3. Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort.
4. Other signs such as breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.
5. As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting and back or jaw pain.

**If you have any of these signs, call 9-1-1 and get to a hospital right away.**

We've all seen the movie scenes where a man gasps, clutches his chest and falls to the ground. In reality, a heart attack victim could easily be a woman, and the scene may not be that dramatic.

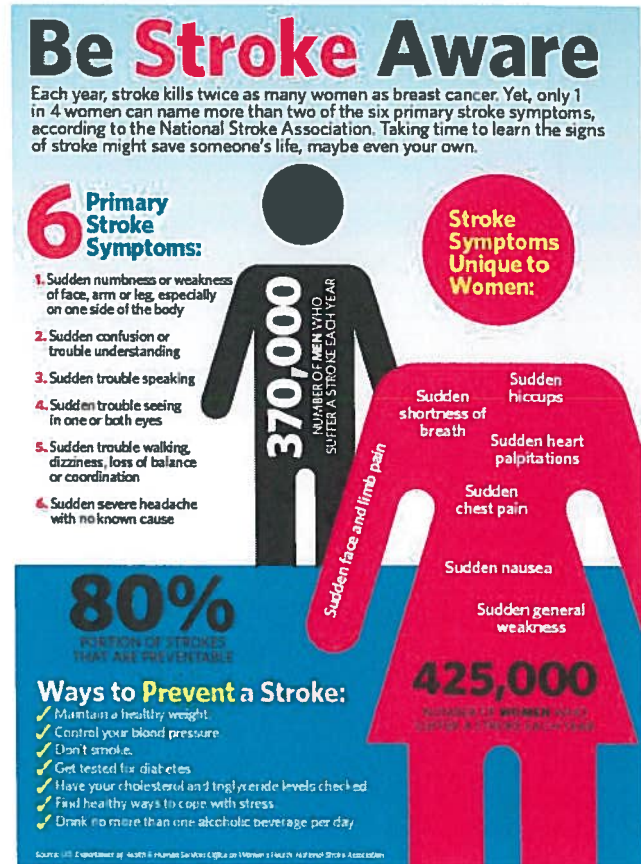
"Although men and women can experience chest pressure that feels like an elephant sitting across the chest, women can experience a heart attack without chest pressure," said Nieca Goldberg, M.D., medical director for the Joan H. Tisch Center for Women's Health at NYU's Langone Medical Center and an American Heart Association volunteer. "Instead they may experience shortness of breath, pressure or pain in the lower chest or upper abdomen, dizziness, lightheadedness or fainting, upper back pressure or extreme fatigue."

Even when the signs are subtle, the consequences can be deadly, especially if the person doesn't get help right away.

### "I thought I had the flu"

Even though heart disease is the No. 1 killer of women in the United States, women often chalk up the symptoms to less life-threatening conditions like acid reflux, the flu or normal aging.

"They do this because they are scared and because they put their families first," Goldberg said. "There are still many women who are shocked that they could be having a heart attack."



A heart attack strikes someone about every 43 seconds. It occurs when the blood flow that brings oxygen to the heart muscle is severely reduced or cut off completely. This happens because the arteries that supply the heart with blood can slowly narrow from a buildup of fat, cholesterol and other substances (plaque).

Watch an animation of a heart attack.

Many women think the signs of a heart attack are unmistakable — the image of the elephant comes to mind — but in fact they can be subtler and sometimes confusing.

You could feel so short of breath, "as though you ran a marathon, but you haven't made a move," Goldberg said.

Some women experiencing a heart attack describe upper back pressure that feels like squeezing or a rope being tied around them, Goldberg said. Dizziness, lightheadedness or actually fainting are other symptoms to look for.

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## HEART ATTACK (CONT.)

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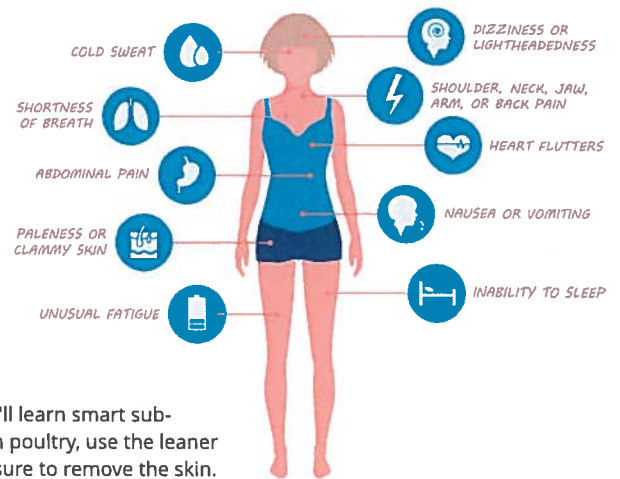
"Many women I see take an aspirin if they think they are having a heart attack and never call 9-1-1," Goldberg said. "But if they think about taking an aspirin for their heart attack, they should also call 9-1-1."

### Take care of yourself

Heart disease is preventable. Here are Goldberg's top tips:

- Schedule an appointment with your healthcare provider to learn your personal risk for heart disease.
- Quit smoking. Did you know that just one year after you quit, you'll cut your risk of coronary heart disease by 50 percent?
- Start an exercise program. Just walking 30 minutes a day can lower your risk for attack and stroke.
- Modify your family's diet if needed. Check out these healthy cooking tips. You'll learn smart substitutions, healthy snacking ideas and better prep methods. For example, with poultry, use the leaner light meat (breasts) instead of the fattier dark meat (legs and thighs), and be sure to remove the skin.

## Heart Attack Warning Signs in Women



## JULY IS UV SAFETY MONTH PROTECT YOURSELF IN 5 WAYS!



- Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the United States.
- Ultraviolet (UV) rays from the sun are the main cause of skin cancer.
- Shade, Hats, Sunglasses, Clothing, and Sunscreen can protect you from harmful UV rays.

## GREEK SALAD RECIPE

### INGREDIENTS

#### For the salad

- 1 pt. grape or cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 cucumber, thinly sliced into half moons
- 1 c. halved kalamata olives
- 1/2 red onion, thinly sliced
- 3/4 c. crumbled feta

#### For the dressing

- 2 tbsp. red wine vinegar
- Juice of 1/2 a lemon
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1/4 c. extra-virgin olive oil

### Instructions

1. In a large bowl, stir together tomatoes, cucumber, olives, and red onion. Gently fold in feta.
2. In a small bowl, make dressing: Combine vinegar, lemon juice, and oregano and season with salt and pepper. Slowly add olive oil, whisking to combine.
3. Drizzle dressing over salad.

